

## Black Oak

### Dog Slaughter Beach

Deep inside the country, he went out for some air  
Amid an awful night of eating household objects on a dare  
A tea towel, a handful of refrigerator magnets, and a watch

He staggered through the mudroom, got sick out in the street  
The towel in tiny pieces, magnetic letters neat  
And now arranged in such a way that they should spell his lover  
's name  
And time was of the essence

The engine turning over, the summons in the shop  
He could not recall the number, but he knew it was a lot  
His belly warm with drink  
He leaned into the freeway in the night

Investigating exit ramps, waiting for a sign  
Scanning up the A.M. band, sliding down the vine  
He felt his stomach turn again and pulled off at the park  
She was standing in the black oak, carving poems in the bark

Planted in the café, her bloodied saber drawn  
Marking up the manuscript, hard against the dawn  
She turns on the recorder and pulls a nervous breath before she  
speaks

"7 A.M. Tuesday, January 9  
Realizing this may put my career on the line"  
The café man approaches, with a corded phone and tells her  
"It's for you"

Somewhere in the static, a disembodied voice  
The circumstances changed, she will not have a choice  
The line dies, crackles soft, then sputters back to life  
"They found him at the black oak, they dug him up last night"

(7 A.M. Tuesday, January 9)  
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